Letter from Taizé

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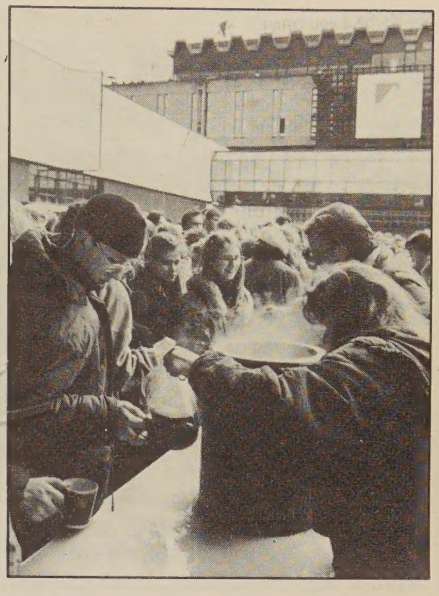
MORE THAN 100,000 YOUNG ADULTS IN PARIS

Brought together in trust



How many are they? How many kilometers have they covered to get to Paris? How many families to welcome them, how many persons have organized their welcome, expected them, prayed with them, sang with them, exchanged with them? More than numbers, the smiles, the deep joy that spread about can say what was this 17th European Meeting, the fourth in Paris.

Up until the last moment uncertainty remained: will all have a place to stay upon their arrival? And the doors opened. Some doors even stayed open until two o'clock or three o'clock in the morning. Some families had to wait for the young people to whom they had offered lodging as they sometimes arrived with as much as fifteen hours delay because of the long wait at the borders.

And all did finally manage to arrive. More than half of them were from eastern Europe: those who came from very far away, the hundreds of Russians, the Ukrainians, the Bulgarians, the Serbians. There were also thousands of young adults from Lithuania, Estonia, Latvia, Rumania and Croatia. And from other countries of Europe as well: from Greece, Albania, Bosnia and all the way to Finland and Norway and even southern Portugal and Spain. Young people from fifty-four countries on other continents also took part in the European Meeting.

Never before had so many places been found in families! Nearly half of the participants were accomodated by residents, the others were housed in sports halls, schools and premises of all kinds.

MONTHS OF PREPARATION

For several months in the four hundred parishes that welcomed, some of which were located one hour's journey from Paris, small groups formed to search for lodging and to prepare the morning programs for the European Meeting. Flexibility and a sense of organization made it possible to find solutions to most unforeseen problems: delay of the arrivals, illnesses, lack of animators, difficulties with communication... In some parishes, this experience of welcome fostered a better understanding of one another and appreciation between generations:

"As a member of the preparation team in St. Francis de Sales' parish, I want to express how this immense meeting was not simply a matter of following the crowd. It was important because of its 'before' and it will be even more important because of its 'after'.

"Its 'before' was the whole phase of preparation. From the first gatherings onwards, we were told to try to live this time as that of the preparation for a celebration. So we rejoice in advance, we don't want to disappoint those who are coming to rejoice with us. Without this spirit of celebration, how would we be able to assure during two months that someone be present at the end of the four

Sunday masses each week to seek out families who could offer accomodation? How would we have found around us in the neighborhood twenty persons ready to speak out about their commitment and their hope?"

After the meeting, in a letter adressed to the numerous families of the Paris region who offered to welcome and to the groups of preparation, Brother Roger underlined the importance of this experience shared with the 100,000 young people from across Europe:

"Why, for seventeen years now, do we have each year a European Meeting far from Taizé, in a large city? It is that, in the presence of the unsettling of spiritual values in numerous countries, we questioned ourselves very much and we said to ourselves: to welcome in Taizé, yes, more than ever — but also expand this welcome by having meetings across Europe.

"With my brothers we wish to be before anything else men who listen, never spiritual masters. For us, it is important to listen to young people with trust ... and that by the light of the Gospel the questions within them may be enlightened. Perhaps at all ages, we all need to receive something like a shock of meaning.

"We have never wanted to create a Taizé movement but rather to go to the parishes. Within them all generations, from the oldest on to small children, can make real a very simple sign of ecumenicity.

"And so this essential point becomes clear: to advance from one beginning to another, we would all like to support ourselves above all upon the humble trusting of faith."

THE WELCOME IN THE FAMILIES

When we renounce searching for what we are going to receive and we are ready to share quite simply what we have, the exchange deepens right away. What freed us from all worry is to be ourselves without being very gifted for languages!" Many families could take up this statement by a couple from a parish in the centre of Paris. The families welcomed more than generously, and it was not rare to see some families house as many as ten young adults.

In November-December, the appeal to find places of accomodation was echoed by radio and even by television. Thus it was heard well beyond the limits of the churches. Each day people telephoned to offer to welcome in their homes, sometimes they had no link whatsoever with the parish. Some did not even know which was the closest church to their address. Some astonishing offers were made, like the beautiful welcome offered by a 90 year old Jewish woman ...

"When we began to search for families who could welcome young people," explains Father Jean-Claude, responsible for a parish in the north of Paris, "I thought first of all of the poor families with children of the same age as those taking part in the meeting. I was confident and we were not disappointed by their generosity. I wanted particularly that they keep hope by seeing young people come to pray. In our neighborhoods, there can be up to fifty different nationalities among the residents. Many are unemployed, and some offered accomodation nonetheless. Others helped in their own way. For example, a Muslim baker in a neighboring town offered the bread for the breakfasts."

A number of the residents of the Ile-de-France were impressed by the calm of the young people and tried to help them even without having been among those who welcomed in their homes: "What a surprise," relates a couple involved in the organization in Villeproux, forty kilometers from Paris, "when we saw a Parisian bring us a young Polish person who was lost. This boy had not understood the name of our town and he had made a detour of 100 kilometers through another town! This man from Paris had seen a few images from the meeting on television and that was enough for him to go out of his way to help a young stranger."

Among the hundreds of accounts, that of this family: "The two small groups of young Polish and Croatian girls left us some flowers which form together a nice bouquet. We had trouble communicating. But it was the singing at night in our house that brought us together. It's true that the cultural attraction of Paris was strong for them, but we sensed that they had been deeply touched by something else."

The astonishment was reciprocal. A young woman from Dresden, Germany, wrote after the meeting: "What marked me particularly was the welcome that I received in a family originally from Guadeloupe. Compared to us, this family was very poor. So my astonishment was that much greater to see all that this family could share with us in such a great simplicity."

The presence in Paris of 100,000 young adults come with a yearning for peace left no one indifferent. Some parishes were witnesses of very meaningful gestures of openness: "At Saint Joseph of the Four Roads, a parish situated west of

Paris, the relations with the Muslims have been good for a long time. On the 31st of December, one of the leaders of the mosque came to the prayer vigil for peace and he said a few words for everyone which were right away translated into five languages. He spoke about tolerance, about friendship and about the search for God and the common pursuit of peace."

The lunch on January 1st closed the meeting. With much simplicity, people welcomed all those taking part in the meeting who had not been given an accomodation in families. There wasn't a question of offering a large meal, the coaches were to leave at 3:00 in the afternoon. But despite the last minute difficulties while organizing the departures, many young people were thus able to enter a home and take back with them an image of French family life.

THE MORNING PRAYER IN THE PARISHES

Prayer, which is at the heart of the European Meeting, gives a rhythm to each day. Every morning, all would gather in the four hundred church communities of the Paris region participating in the meeting:

"A group of young people from Germany who were welcomed in our parish just sent us a cross painted onto a linen cloth", said with emotion Jean-Pierre, who organized the meeting in a new town south of Paris. "They painted it themselves for our church. The prayers that we had together were each day more and more beautiful. Every morning my surprise was the same: they were all gathered together from their various sleeping places in families or in the gymnasium and there to pray!

And up until the last day, the miracle of this simple and profound prayer was renewed, with the high points being the vigil for the New Year and the Eucharist shared Sunday morning. By chance a few instrumentalists arrived with a guitar and flutes and we quickly learned the songs in the different languages. Now, thanks to this painted cross, our little church will keep a visible sign of the strong experience that we had.

THE MEETINGS IN THE MORNING

Each day of the meeting after the morning prayer, different persons from the region who are involved in various commitments would come to exchange with the young people. For the participants, this was the chance to discover a multiplicity of involvements and examples of generosity lived from day to day. For the parishioners, preparing in advance these morning meetings was a great experience:

"The preparation of the morning programs, with the objective of meeting people actively involved in our area, allowed us first of all to discover one another. There are fifty more or less large groups who have an activity in the parish. Personal bonds were woven. It's not often that we have the opportunity to do something together where everyone has a place. Those who spoke about their involvements, be it with the catechism, or the prison chaplaincy, or the Catholic Assistance, were impressed by the attentiveness of the young people despite the difficulties of translation. Some bonds have out-lasted the meeting. For example, after the visit to a senior citizen's home some of us decided to return there from time to time."

THE PRAYER AT THE PORTE DE VERSAILLES

At mid-day all of the participants headed towards the Parc des Expositions at the Porte de Versailles, the exhibition grounds for the city of Paris. There the meals took place as did the mid-day and evening prayers. The afternoon workshops were held there as well. This movement of people demanded a lot of patience at certain times, particularly when the subway lines were overflowing. Nonetheless, even there where people could have become impatient, a positive mood reigned as if the joy was contagious.

For those taking part as for the many residents of Paris and the surrounding area who joined them, the common prayers were the central moment of the meeting. Four large halls had been arranged as places of prayer. A young French woman describes her experience:

"An extreme simplicity of surroundings: small candles, tapestries, a few icons and the cross from Taizé define the central point of the prayer. As soon as the first notes of the songs rise up from the choir to extend rapidly out to the multitude, the hall is transformed into a cathedral of prayer. Everything promotes contemplation and the prayer reaches into the core of one's self through precious moments of silence. One powerful moment is the evening during the prayer around the cross upon which thousands place their foreheads -- a beautiful image that makes us aware of He who gathers us all together."

The Brothers of the community dispersed themselves among the four halls, a small white splash within the immensity of these places of prayer. Each evening, at the beginning of the prayer, Brother Roger gave a meditation translated into eighteen languages. Then with a group of children he passed from one hall to another.

Every evening several church leaders from the Paris region who participated in the prayer would be seated near the brothers. Among them there included Cardinal Lustiger or other bishops from the eight diocese of the region, orthodox bishops, and the President of the Protestant Federation of France. Some of these leaders also went to visit some parishes during the meeting. Others took part in celebrations such as the vigil on the 31st of December or the celelebrations of the eucharist on January 1st.

At different moments of the European Meeting certain peoples came together

→ 7

An Inner Road Towards Happiness

Psalm 22

Human beings were created to be happy, and someone who is happy can say: I have done God's will on earth." An old Russian monk, crippled by illness but happy to be alive, speaks these surprising words in a novel by Dostoyevsky.

At times we sense somewhere within ourselves "the secret heartbeat of a happiness almost beyond words" (*The Wonder of a Love*). But we do not dare to believe very much in this happiness, or to show it. The presence of evil in us and in the world sometimes makes us think that it would be better to focus on what causes suffering.

The Scriptures do not ignore the terrifying history of evil. But they also attest to the fact that, wherever there is a human being, joy is not far away. Psalm 22, for example, expresses cries of despair and abandonment that have resounded across the centuries and that Jesus made his own on the cross. But it also traces an inner road where lamentation is transformed into the sound of celebration, and isolation turns into the happiness of being together.

No one should think that this road is inaccessible. It is open even for those who no longer know how to pray. Does not the psalm begin with the impression that prayer has not worked: "I cry out, and you do not answer" (v. 2)? God's silence is so total that it seems as if God does not even exist.

Unable to become resigned to this situation, the psalmist asks a question: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (v. 1). He repeats twice "My God," and this reminder of an intimacy with God makes the reason for God's forsaking him even more unbearable. But it is better to express our complaints than to harden our hearts. Every complaint contains a thirst for love. It is the beginning of that openness of heart which we need so much in order to find happiness.

In the depths of his distress, the psalmist recognizes that even if everything is black in his own life, joy has not in fact disappeared from the universe. He knows that God's goodness continues to be praised: "You, the Holy One, are the praise of Israel" (v. 4). If at times we find it impossible to express joy, that is no reason to deny its existence. Someone else's happiness, that of a child for example, can reveal to us what our own suffering hides fom us: that God is the Holy One, the One pure of all evil.

In his extreme deprivation and without any support (vv. 6-8), the psalmist does not let his heart die. He thinks of his mother with tenderness. He imagines that he is close to her like a newborn child. And he is amazed at his ability to trust in her. The end of verse 9 says: "In the arms of my mother, you made me trust." This trust is indistinguishable from life itself; God gave it to him together with life.

The trust that at present the psalmist can place only in God, and in nobody else, turns his lamenting into a prayer of petition (v. 12-21). He calls for help: "Lord, come quickly to help me." He prays in order to be delivered from threats and from anguish. Jesus taught us that we should ask God to deliver us from evil. But we often forget this, and when we are overwhelmed by trials and see no way out, it can happen that we look for scapegoats and make them responsible for our misfortunes. The psalmist likewise accuses his enemies, and even God. But gradually, everything focuses upon the request: "Help me; save me!" There comes a time when we have to choose between accusing and asking for help.

The humble request leads to relief: "You hear me" (end of v. 21). These words are so surprising that the ancient Greek translation of the Bible, followed by many modern translations, reads something else. If this fact of being heard is not described in detail, it is nonetheless a reality that confirms the joy that explodes in the second part of the psalm (vv. 22-31). God looked with loving-kindness upon the person who had been brought low and felt worthless. "He has not despised or disdained the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him" (v. 24).

And all of a sudden, happiness is there, in the heart of a person who knows he is loved. He sings: "I will proclaim your name to my brothers; in the congregation I will praise you" (v. 22). In his joy, the psalmist forgets the wrongs he has suffered. He sings in the presence of all. He is not angry at anyone. He invites the entire nation to celebrate with him. God loves him; this is no time to sulk! Everybody is welcome to come and celebrate!

According to the New Testament, Christ sings these same words (Heb 2,12). He did not hesitate to call all human beings, including those who crucified him, his brothers and sisters. He wanted them to enter into his joy. The festival of the resurrection is forgiveness. Risen from the dead, how could Christ hold a grudge? Life swallowed up sin and death. He suffered to the point of praying "with loud cries and tears" (Heb 5,7). Now, he forgives in song.

Sometimes, in order to forgive, we have to struggle inwardly, keeping our eyes fixed on the crucified Jesus. Our heart remains heavy and almost without strength. But there are also days when, as in Psalm 22, our hearts are *Happy* to forget wrongs and *Love* to forgive. Saint Paul, in prison, knew this when he wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always! Let your goodness be evident to all" (Phil 4,4-5). A joyful heart is good to everyone.

This happiness is so precious that it deserves all our attention. We should not neglect it in the name of our efforts to combat evil. In the trials that divide and destroy, it keeps us in communion and on the road to holiness. "All the righteous, all the saints, all the holy martyrs," said the old Russian monk, "were happy."

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

MAY

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Jn 6.22-29 Ac 11.3/15-18
1 MON The people asked Jesus, "What must we do to do God's work?" Jesus replied, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

Jn 6.30-35 Ac 11.19-22
2 TUE Jesus said: I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Jn 14.6-14 Ac 13.26-33
3 WED Philip said to Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." Jesus said, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father."

Ac 13.34-43 Jn 6.44-51
4 THU Through Christ, forgiveness of sins is offered to everyone who believes.

Jn 6.60-69 Ac 13.44-49
5 FRI Seeing that many of his disciples were turning away, Jesus said to the Twelve, "What about you, do you want to go away too?" Peter answered, "Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words of eternal life."

Ac 15.7-12 Mk 16.9-15
6 SAT Peter said: God chose me so that the nations might hear from my lips the message of the Good News and believe. God makes no distinction between human beings and he purified their hearts by faith.

Jn 10.27-30 Rv 7.9,14b-17
7 SUN Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I and the Father are one.

1 P 1.1-5 Jn 10.1-10
8 MON In his great mercy, God has given us new birth into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 P 1.6-9 Jn 10.11-18
9 TUE Though you have not seen Christ Jesus, you love him. Still without seeing him you believe in him and so are already filled with a joy so glorious it cannot be described.

Jn 12.20-26 1 P 1.10-12
10 WED Jesus said: Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who is not attached to their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

Jn 12.44-50 1 P 1.13-16
11 THU Jesus said: I did not come to judge the world, but to save it.

Jn 15.1-8 1 P 1.17-21
12 FRI Jesus said: Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it remains part of the vine, neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

1 P 1.22-25 Lk 24.1-12
13 SAT Love one another deeply, from the heart.

Jn 13.31-35 Rv 21.1-5a
14 SUN Jesus said: Love one another just as I have loved you. By this, everyone will recognize you as my disciples.

Jn 14.1-6 1 Co 15.1-8
15 MON Jesus said: Do not let your hearts be troubled. You trust in God, trust also in me.

Jn 14.15-17 1 Co 15.20-28
16 TUE Jesus said: I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor who will stay with you for ever – the Spirit of truth.

Jn 15.9-13 1 Co 14.42-44
17 WED Jesus said: There is no greater love than giving one's life for those one loves.

Jn 15.14-17 1 Co 15.44-49
18 THU Jesus said to his disciples: I no longer call you servants, for a servant does not know his master's business. I call you friends, because everything I have learnt from my Father I have made known to you.

Jn 15.18-21 1 Co 15.50-53
19 FRI Jesus said: I have chosen you out of the world. Remember, "No servant is greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they kept my word, they will keep yours as well.

1 Co 15.54-58 Jn 20.11-18
20 SAT Stand firm, let nothing shake you, be full of energy for the work of God, knowing that in the Lord nothing of your labour is wasted.

Jn 14.23-29 Rv 21.10-23
21 SUN Jesus said: Peace I leave you, my own peace I give you; a peace that the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Col 4.2-6 Jn 15.26-16.4
22 MON Persevere in prayer, being watchful and thankful.

Ps 5 Jn 16.5-7 Jm 5.13-16
23 TUE Thanks to your faithful love I may enter your house, where I bow down in adoration. Lead me, O Lord, in your justice.

Jn 16.16-22 Ep 6.18-20
24 WED Jesus said to his disciples: Now you are sad, but I shall see you again and you hearts will be full of joy. And that joy no one shall take from you.

Ac 1.1-11 Lk 24.46-53
25 THU ASCENSION
Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

Mt 28.16-20 Ep 7.7-13
26 FRI Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: I am with you always, to the end of time.

Ep 2.1-6 Jn 20.19-23
27 SAT Because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in our sins.

Jn 17.20-26 Ac 7.55-60
28 SUN Jesus prayed for his disciples, saying: Father, may they all be one, just as you are in me and I am in you, so that they may also be in us and that the world may believe that you sent me.

1 P 2.4-6 Jn 16.29-33
29 MON Come to Christ, the living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in God's sight.

1 P 2.9-10 Jn 17.1-11
30 TUE Peter writes: Once you were not a people at all, and now you are the people of God.

Zp 3.14-18 Lk 1.39-45
31 WED Your God is with you. He will quiet you with his love, he will dance with joy for you.

JOHANNINE HOURS

ISAIAH 58,6-11

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

Untying the cords of the yoke, refusing all forms of violence... There can be a suppressed violence which takes root, very often without my knowing it, in the wounds I bear within myself. It is like a tourniquet which presses upon the heart and which distorts my relationships with others. Refusing violence means placing trust at the beginning of every meeting.

Feeding, clothing, giving shelter means to satisfy the needs and elementary rights of a human being. But it also implies caring for, educating, listening to, giving an occupation to... in other words recognising and developing all that is human in the other because he or she is of my "own flesh". It means as well: making life possible, alleviating suffering, restoring beauty and meaning to life.

"Do not turn away from your own flesh and blood", love others as you love yourself. The prophet Isaiah notes that it is this which allows my own wound to heal and for all that is in me to radiate. What seemed to be an ethical demand is in the first place something which allows me to become more fully human!

This then prepares a way for God's glory and the light of the resurrection which is an attentiveness to all that concerns the human being and the human creative capacity to serve. God trusts to the human heart as a way of making himself known.

- How can my life become a light and wellspring, a marker to help others find their way? How can I bring to light the gifts and capacities of others?
- How has some meeting or some involvement for others transfigured, healed or revealed a new dimension in my life?

MEDITATING ON THE WORD

JUNE

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

Jn 21.15-19 1 P 3.18-22

1 THU A third time, Jesus said to Peter, "Do you love me?" Peter was hurt that he asked him a third time, "Do you love me?" and said, "Lord, you know everything; you know I love you."

Ac 20.22-25 Jn 21.20-25

2 FRI Paul said: I do not place any value on my own life, provided that I complete the mission the Lord Jesus gave me – to bear witness to the good news of God's grace.

Jl 3.1-5 Jn 7.37-39

3 SAT The Lord says: I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity.

Jn 4.13-14 Ac 2.1-11 Jn 14.15-26

4 SUN PENTECOST Jesus said: Anyone who drinks the water I give will never be thirsty again. The water I give them will become a spring of water within them, welling up to eternal life.

Jr 31.31-34 Mk 10.13-15

5 MON The Lord says: I shall put my law deep within them, I shall write it on their hearts. I shall be their God and they will be my people.

Mk 10.17-22 Ezk 37.11-14

6 TUE Jesus said to a rich man: You lack one thing. Go, sell everything you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

Tt 3.5-7 Mk 10.23-27

7 WED Through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, God has generously poured out on us the Holy Spirit, so that justified by his grace we may be heirs in hope of eternal life.

Mk 10.28-34 1 Co 12.13

8 THU Jesus said: No one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the Gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age, together with persecutions, and, in the age to come, eternal life.

Mk 10.35-45 2 Co 1.21-22

9 FRI Jesus said to his disciples: You know that in the world rulers lord it over their subjects and make their power felt. This is not to happen among you. No, anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant.

Ws 1.7 Lk 17.20-21

10 SAT The Spirit of the Lord fills the world: it holds all things together and knows every world said.

Jn 16.12-15 Pr 8.22-31

11 SUN Jesus said: When the Spirit of truth comes, he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking of his own accord but will say only what he has been told.

2 Co 1.1-5 Mk 10.46-52

12 MON Just as the sufferings of Christ overflow into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.

2 Co 1.8-10 Mk 1.1-11

13 TUE Paul writes: Overburdened to the point of despair, we learnt to rely, not on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead to life.

2 Co 1.18-22 Mk 1..15-19

14 WED Christ Jesus was never Yes-and-No; his nature is all Yes. For in him is found the Yes to all God's promises.

Ws 16.20-21/26 Mk 14.12-16/22-26

15 THU Those you love, Lord, will learn that it is not the crops of the earth that provide nourishment, but your word that supports all who believe in you.

Mk 11.22-25 2 Co 3.1-3

16 FRI Jesus said: When you pray, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, as your Father in heaven forgives your sins.

2 Co 3.16-18 Lk 19.1-10

17 SAT All of us, with our unveiled faces reflecting the Lord's glory like mirrors, are being transformed into the image that we reflect.

Lk 9.11b-17 Gn 14.18-20

18 SUN Taking the five loaves and two fish and looking up to heaven, Jesus said the blessing over them; then he broke them and handed them to his disciples to distribute among the people. They all ate as much as they wanted.

Mk 12.1-12 2 Co 4.5-6

19 MON The stone which the builders rejected has become the cornerstone: this is the Lord's doing.

2 Co 4.7-10 Mk 12.13-17

20 TUE We carry the treasure of God's glory in earthen vessels so that it may be quite clear that the radiance comes from God, not from us.

2 Co 4.13-14 Mk 12.26-27

21 WED We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, will also raise us up with Jesus and bring us to himself.

Mk 12.28-34 2 Co 4.16-18

22 THU Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. These are the two greatest commandments.

2 Co 5.1-5 Mk 12.41-44

23 FRI Paul writes: We know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven.

Lk 1.57-80 Ac 13.22-26

24 SAT St JOHN THE BAPTIST At John the Baptist's birth, Zechariah said: Blessed be God, for he enables us to serve him without fear.

Lk 9.18-24 Zc 12.10-11

25 SUN Jesus said: Whoever wants to be a follower of mine must renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

2 Co 5.15-18 Mt 5.1-12

26 MON Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.

Mt 5.13-16 2 Co 5.19-6.2

27 TUE Jesus said: Let your light shine in people's sight, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Mt 5.20-24 2 Co 6.3-10

28 WED Jesus said: If you are bringing you offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering.

Mt 16.13-19 Ac 12.1-11

29 THU SS PETER AND PAUL Jesus asked his disciples: "Who do people say I am?" "Some say John the Baptist," they answered, "some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But you," he said, "who do you say I am?" Peter spoke up and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

2 Co 7.5-7 Mt 5.43-48

30 FRI Paul writes: We were beset by conflicts without and by fears within; but God, who encourages the downcast, consoled us.

JOHANNINE HOURS

JOHN 15,11-1

Johannine hours are meant as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer in the midst of our daily life. During the course of a day, take an hour or so to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, a group of 3 to 10 people can meet to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

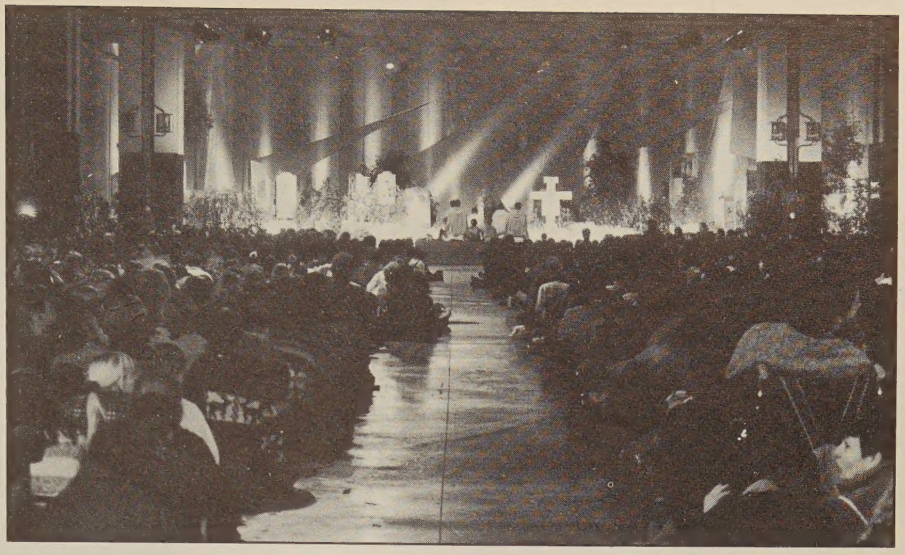
Jesus says these words in some of the last moments that he will have together with his disciples, on the eve of his passion. When he is about to face public humiliation, official condemnation, the desertion of his disciples and suffering, then as it could seem that violence and fear have overwhelmed everything, Jesus sees a joy.

He does not want to communicate instructions or know-how, but to ensure that his own joy will continually spring afresh in his friends. His whole effort is directed to uncovering that wellspring deep within them, so that the coming storm will not be able to destroy their joy. His joy is not the "satisfaction" of one who has made it but rather the foundation of his life, his intimate motivation from the start of his mission. "All my joy (favour) is in you" are words that Jesus hears at his baptism. To be among human beings, his Father's happiness has sustained his mission.

By so solemnly delivering his "commandment" to his friends Jesus lends all his authority to his words, distilling the very meaning of his existence. Jesus makes of his disciples leaders and bearers who are sent out. He places in them a wellspring where the enthusiasm of their life will be renewed. By giving what lies at the source of his own commitment Jesus makes it possible for them to give everything. To give their lives, day by day, letting Jesus' life grow within them.

- How can we remain close to the wellspring of Christ's joy? For whom can we live in happiness and bear witness to a joy?
- How can I give my life at every moment – when my life is so imperfect and I don't always see clearly?

→ 3



a special eucharistic celebration. ere were orthodox liturgies for Rus-ns, Rumanians, Bulgarians and Ser-ans. Lutheran celebrations brought gether young people from Estonia or m Scandinavia. A Polish mass was cel-rated by two bishops from Poland and her masses were celebrated for Croa-ns, Slovaks and Lithuanians.

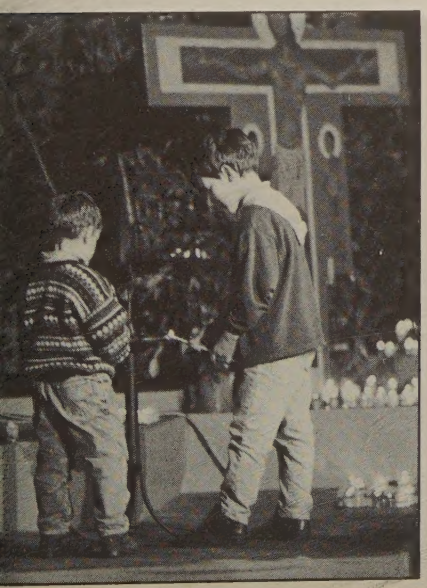
"After the joy of the prayer, there was so the joy of serving one another", said bine from Manosque. "Concretely for it was the serving of the last meal on e terrace of Hall 7 during four hours nding out food in the wet cold of this st evening of the year. Wonderful vi-n of this unceasing wave of all those eople who thanked us in their own lan-uage and to whom we said 'Happy ew Year' in the few languages we new." Like her, thousands of young eople helped with the distribution of e meals, the cleaning up, or welcoming veryone.

During the after-noons, three periods reflection and sharing were proposed the halls of the Parc des Expositions:

On Thursday a Bible reflection around e theme of "lighting a fire upon the rth": an introduction given by a rother of Taizé, then a time of sharing in mall groups helped to rediscover the ferences and the foundations necessary build a life of faith.

Friday after-noon, those taking part me together for the traditional "regional eeting": an emphasis on meaningful ex-eriences lived within diverse local com-unities, a rich and stimulating exchange ideas to inspire everyone for their return ome.

On Saturday it was the turn of those ho had come from very far to get up nto the podiums and to welcome for the forum." Young adults from other conti-



nents and Europeans from the "outskirts" had the chance to witness to the trials that their peoples are going through and to the hope that gives life to their Churches. In a festive atmosphere punctuated by traditional songs and dances, the situations evoked were often quite serious. Their sense of responsibility, sometimes the emotion of those who spoke was passed on to those who came into contact with them and who were moved by the force of such commitments. In little time, everyone was able to prepare to listen to various treasures of the christian life through those witnessing: liturgical songs from the choir of the Orthodox cathedral of Novi Sad in Serbia; christians from Bangladesh who animate prayers in the villages; traditional songs from Lithuania accompanied by the Kankele, a local zither; young adults from Zimbabwe involved in a project for the prevention of AIDS and the care of those suffering from it; young South Africans; Mexicans; Japonese; Indians; Chilians. Father Valentine from Moscow invited others to pray for the peoples of Russia as he was just learning of the escalation of the conflict in the Caucasus.

Every after-noon, those who wished could also visit one of the neighboring churches to pray there in silence or to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

HELP FROM ALL

Several thousands of young people experienced the meeting quite differently. Those who had chosen to come to offer a helping hand, arriving as soon as the 26th of December. They lent much support to the local preparation teams, taking at times the responsibility for large collective accomodations. Others took part in the welcome on the first day, gave directions to the arriving coaches and prepared the places of prayer.

To the irreplacable work of the preparation groups in the parishes was added a precious support from other horizons: the majority of the local municipalities made available sports halls for accomodations, and schools opened their doors as well. Even the Army housed four thousand young people in barracks. They also provided 25,000 liters of boiling water each day for the soup and the tea served all day long near the halls of the Port de Versailles.

The contribution of the public transportation systems was essential. Thanks to the additions to the normal means of transportaion --underground, buses, and trains -- all of those taking part were able to get back to their places of accomodation without any problems. (For example, one hundred special trains to the outlying towns were added especially for the meeting.)

AN ENTHUSIASM FOR BEING OPEN AND FOR GOING DEEPER

Meetings in the parishes of the Paris region allowed families who had welcomed participants to express themselves after the meeting. This was the chance to come together and to get to know one another better. Some questions came up: How to maintain the same spirit of openness and of welcome? How to continue to sustain one another through prayer? How to be more attentive to those who are alone? Many parish communities wished to carry on a regular prayer, to keep contact with among others those who had spoken during the mornings.

Upon returning home, each person knows that he or she is sustained along the way by others from all countries, and that she or he can live in her or his own way, at home, a pilgrimage of trust on earth. The day after the meeting a Dutch girl wrote for example:

"The meeting in Paris inspired me very much. After an intense preparation, I was saying to myself: 'The meeting will be a time of meditation and reflection like during the other European Meetings.' But no. And this was a disappointment at first. Then I understood that I was discovering another aspect. It was quite exceptional to live a parable of communion with so many people from so many countries and from so many church traditions! And if I see what our visit meant for the parish where we were welcomed ...! We arrived very tired, but my how the hospitality was great! We saw the parishioners and their pastor 'blossom' anew. And if we knew what the Church is trying to be in this area where many refugees and foreigners live, and where housing is such a problem ... What didn't this meeting of young people mean for the Church in Paris and the region!

"This became ever more clear for me: no, I am not here for myself, but for others. And perhaps I could also say: I am here to discover God in the heart of others, for during the meetings and the prayers it was Christ Himself that we were meeting. And we often discover this after the fact.

"And if I could behold all those who helped with the preparation in Paris — their commitment, their love for Christ and for the Church, this was all tangable and appreciable. The only thing that I may do then by gratitude is to carry this love myself. I also received alot through the Bible introduction on Elijah. I identified with Elijah who would have liked at first to keep everything under control and who is then led towards trust in God. He hears God's voice in a breath of silence and is thus sent out towards human beings."

From the 5th to the 7th of May, 1995

Meeting for Southern Africa

"When will you be coming back with some Brothers into our country?" Very often this question was asked to Brother Roger by young South Africans who had come to Taizé from various parts of their country. Two years ago, the leaders of the various Churches in South Africa sent an invitation. And a meeting, a stage of the pilgrimage of trust across the earth, is now being prepared in Johannesburg. It will take place from May 5th to May 7th, 1995. Brother Roger has already been in South Africa in 1978. He had then visited among others the areas of Soweto in Johannesburg and Cross-roads on the Cape. The following year, Archbishop Desmond Tutu came to Taizé. He returned there in 1980, carrying out a pilgrimage of hope with 144 young adults from South Africa from different backgrounds. Archbishop Tutu explained himself the meaning of this pilgrimage: "When in 1979 I was praying in the Church of Reconciliation in Taizé amongst 5,000 young people from every continent, I had what I cannot otherwise describe as a vision inspired by God: wouldn't it be wonderful that a pilgrimage of young South Africans of all races come to Taizé to pray, to rejoice, to live simply an anticipation of our faith in a South Africa without apartheid? Even the number of young people was suggested to me: 144, like the 144,000 chosen ones which Revelations speaks about. And this pilgrimage came about the following year. They were able to come to Taizé. And upon returning home they witnessed in their Churches and commited themselves to work for the bringing about of our dream of a South Africa without apartheid. The next meeting in Johannesburg is being prepared in collaboration with the different Churches in the country. The young people will be welcomed in the parish communities and families. Young adults from across the country as well as from neighboring countries are arganizing themselves to come and to take part.

After having animated this meeting, Brother Roger will go to Tanzania where there are many orphan children suffering from AIDS.

Taizé

Easter meetings in Taizé

The Easter meetings in Taizé will begin April 2nd to be followed by the European meetings to be held week after week until All Saint's Day.
Changes have been made so as to accomodate better young people and adults (smaller dormitories, rooms for couples ...)
It is also possible to come for extended week ends until Monday from April 28th to May 1st, May 5th to May 8th, for the feast of the Ascension, from Thursday May 25th until Sunday May 28th, for Pentecost, and from June 2nd until June 5th.

Information and registration:
Welcome, F-71250 Taizé-Communauté,
Tel. 85 50 30 01 (in case of emergency 85 50 30 30), fax: 85 50 30 16

Letter from Taizé

Ordinary subscription: 40 FF (France 30 FF)
Supporting subscription: 75 or 150 FF
Airmail subscription (outside Europe only): 50 FF
(Annual subscription)

means of payment:

- by **credit card** (*Visa, Mastercard, Eurocard, Carte Bleu* send the number of your card and dates of validity to Taiz and say what sum in French Francs you wish to transfer.
- by **international Giro transfer** in French Francs a dressed to: *Lettre de Taizé*, CCP 20041-0100 0061446M038-71 or CCP LYON 614 46 M.
- by **cheque** in French Francs to Lettre de Taizé, F-712 Taizé Communauté made payable through Société Génér (Eurocheques in French Francs accepted).
- In the following countries it is possible to pay the subscripti **within the country**: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cana Czech Republic, Slovakia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Hu gary, India, Ireland, Italy, Korea, Netherlands, New Zeala Norway, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spa Sweden, UK and USA. Write to Taizé to ask for the addr in your country.

Correspondence:
Letter from Taizé, 71250 Taizé-Communauté, Franc

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